

# Sharing Leadership to Maximize Talent

[Marshall Goldsmith](#) May 26, 2010

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With global expansion, intra- and inter-industry restructuring, and increasing numbers of merging organizations, the need for dynamic flexibility and a broad base of knowledge and expertise is greater than ever. Shared leadership, by virtue of its use of the combined best of leaders' abilities, is being tested as one possible solution for meeting these challenging business needs.

## What is shared leadership?

Shared leadership involves maximizing all of the human resources in an organization by empowering individuals and giving them an opportunity to take leadership positions in their areas of expertise. With more complex markets increasing the demands on leadership, the job in many cases is simply too large for one individual.

Sharing leadership isn't easy, but it's definitely possible, and in many cases, highly successful. For instance, at a company that creates user interfaces for web design, the role of CEO was too extensive for one leader. As a result, it was split into two positions with equal status and complementary skills sets and responsibilities. After splitting the role of CEO, the leaders built on the new team, hiring experts to head up research and development, architecture and design, and sales. Using the shared leadership model gave these leaders the opportunity to focus on the areas in which they are most talented, to hire team leaders, and thus develop a successful, well-rounded and somewhat "flattened" company versus a more hierarchically structured company. For this organization, flattening has also meant that power, authority, and decision-making are more widely and deeply dispersed, both laterally and vertically, giving each individual an opportunity to show his or her prowess in certain areas of the company. It has meant deferring to others when they have more expertise. This is not always the easiest thing for leaders to do.

Here are some suggestions for sharing leadership and maximizing talent.

- Give power away to the most qualified individuals to strengthen their capabilities.
- Define the limits of decision-making power.
- Cultivate a climate in which people feel free to take initiative on assignments.
- Give qualified people discretion and autonomy over their tasks and resources and encourage them to use these tools.
- Don't second guess the decisions of those you have empowered to do so.
- Consider yourself a resource rather than the manager.
- Set appropriate follow-up meetings to review progress and take corrective action if necessary.

If you do delegate more to people who are closer to the customer and allow them to take on challenging responsibilities, you will find that you have more time. You will spend less time directing their projects and you may even develop a sense of accomplishment from the achievements of your people rather than from your own direct efforts. Even better, your employees may feel they are more like partners and become more engaged ultimately paving the road for greater success for the organization, the team, and themselves.

[Marshall Goldsmith](#) is recognized as one of the world's leading executive educators and coaches. Dr. Goldsmith's 30 books include [\*What Got You Here Won't Get You There\*](#) and [\*MOJO\*](#).